

COMMUNITY

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U P D A T E

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“If you target children and only talk about the ‘problem’ ones, you end up getting a self-fulfilling prophecy.”

Ron Anderson, grant director of Wake County’s Safe Schools/Healthy Students project

FULL STORY ON PAGE 4

Studies Report Declining Rate of School Violence

Secret Service Study Explores Early Detection in School Shootings

Although several high-profile shootings over the past decade have created the perception that schools are no longer safe, overall school violence continues to drop, according to an annual report card on school crime.

Since 1992, crime against students—including theft, rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault—has decreased by nearly a third. There were 101 incidents per 1,000 students in 1998, compared to 144 crimes per 1,000 nine years ago.

One of several related studies released this past October, the *2000 Annual Report on School Safety*—jointly

authored by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice—confirms that schools remain among the safest places for children and youth. This past school year, 90 percent of the nation’s schools reported no serious violent crime, and 43 percent say they experienced no crime at all.

“We need to strike a balance between holding all students accountable for their actions and ensuring that all students are provided with the resources necessary to succeed to the highest standards,” said Bill Modzeleski, director of the Department of Education’s Safe and Drug-Free Schools

program. “We need to be able to respond to early warning signs in troubled students without unfairly stigmatizing kids.”

A companion document to the report, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2000*, reveals a significant decline in the number of students in grades 9 through 12 who reported carrying a weapon to school one or more days during the previous month—from 12 percent in 1993 to 7 percent in 1999.

While violent deaths at schools are extremely rare events, the Department of Education is partnering with the Secret Service to develop training aids

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COMMENTS

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Tips for Creating a Safe School

The *1998 Annual Report on School Safety* provides the following list of suggestions to help schools create safe environments where all students can learn:

- 1 Provide strong administrative support for assessing and enhancing school safety.
- 2 Redesign the school facility to eliminate dark, secluded and unsupervised spaces.
- 3 Devise a system for reporting and analyzing violent and non-criminal incidents.
- 4 Design an effective school discipline policy.
- 5 Build a partnership with local law enforcement.
- 6 Enlist trained school security professionals in designing and maintaining the school security system.
- 7 Train school staff, including support staff, in all aspects of violence prevention.
- 8 Provide all students access to school psychologists or counselors.
- 9 Provide crisis response services.

- 10 Implement schoolwide education and training on avoiding and preventing violence and violent behavior.
- 11 Use alternate school settings for educating violent and weapon-carrying students.
- 12 Create a climate of tolerance.
- 13 Provide appropriate educational services to all students.
- 14 Reach out to communities and businesses to assist in improving the safety of students.
- 15 Actively involve students in making decisions about school policies and programs.
- 16 Prepare an annual report on school crime and safety and distribute to the public.

A complete list of strategies for communities and parents is available in the *1998 Annual Report on School Safety*, which can be downloaded from www.ed.gov/pubs/AnnSchoolRept98.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

for school administrators, local law enforcement personnel and others to help prevent further attacks at schools.

These incidents of "targeted violence"—in which an attacker selects a particular target prior to a violent attack—are the focus of an ongoing research project that began approximately two years ago.

The Secret Service, which is responsible for protecting national leaders including the president, shared its expertise in threat assessment for a review of 37 U.S. school shootings that date as far back as 1974. Preliminary findings are available in *An Interim Report on the Prevention of Violence in Schools*.

The report warns that "the use of profiles carries a risk of over-identification" and advises schools and communities to redirect their focus to student "behaviors and communications" to determine the probability for a violent attack.

Conclusions drawn in the interim report confirm that:

- Incidents of targeted violence at school are rarely impulsive. The attacks are typically the end result of an understandable and often discernible process of thinking and behavior.
- Prior to most incidents, the attacker told someone about his idea and/or plan.
- There is no accurate or useful pro-

file of "the school shooter."

- Most attackers had previously used guns and had access to them.
- Most shooting incidents were not resolved by law enforcement intervention.
- In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity.
- In a number of cases, having been bullied played a key role in the attack.

These reports are available only online. They can be downloaded from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools' Web site at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/news.html, which provides links to each publication. For more information, call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327).

The Boston Miracle

An Interview with *Mike Hennessey*, Assistant Chief of Boston School Police

Mike Hennessey supervises the police force assigned to 120 schools in Boston, Massachusetts. He began his career in 1974 and reached the rank of lieutenant in 1995, investigating gang activity. Last spring, he became assistant chief.

Have you witnessed a shift in behavior affecting school safety?

Between 1979 and 1986, we started to see street-level crime and the use of drugs. A lot of kids would come to school with cigarette packs full of joints and sell them. Along with this, packs of kids—four to six of them—would rob individuals, stealing chains, anything the kid had of value. So there was a feeling of mistrust. A lot of kids were afraid to have this happen to them.

As a result, kids started to have friends they walked with for protection. They started to carry weapons, like knives, to school. Ironically, the kids who needed protection formed gangs themselves. By 1987, we had the beginnings of a real bad gang problem.

What we found from 1987 to 1993 was that what occurred on the streets affected the schools, because it would play out the next day—and vice versa.

How did you become proactive?

About 1993, the Boston police, school police, clergy, courts, probation department, youth services, street workers and federal government formed collaborations. The gangs terrorizing the neighborhood were investigated, and the most violent



ones were prosecuted. They took the gangs out one by one.

By 1995 things really started to quiet down. The collaborations made a big difference because we're all stakeholders in this city now. The clergy, for instance, give us credibility. You're always going to have the police telling the kids "not to get in trouble and be

good." But if you have a clergy member standing next to you saying "yeah, that's right," the kids know the clergy loves them and wouldn't be telling them that if it wasn't true. And when the kids see this, they know people care about them.

What are some preventive measures Boston has employed?

We do three presentations a week in schools, warning them about the dangers of gang membership. We've talked to over 17,000 kids. At night, we make home visits to at-risk families. We also offer kids summer jobs and after-school programs, because the hours from 2 to 6 p.m. are the most dangerous.

A companion piece is an anti-gang presentation done by female police officers to teach young women about the effects of gang membership.

Since you became proactive, how much has crime been reduced?

In 1991, there were 151 homicides in the city, many of them juveniles. This past year, we had 40 homicides—less than 3 involved juveniles. The reduction in youth violence we've experienced is known as the "Boston Miracle."

Satellite Town Meeting

Tuesday, February 20
8:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. E.T.

Communities and school systems around the country are working collaboratively in new and creative ways to help make schools safer for students. Effective strategies include community wide and school wide efforts that promote healthy child development and reduce school violence and drug abuse. The February Satellite Town Meeting, "Keeping Schools and Communities Safe: Collaborating for Healthy Children" will feature programs focused on prevention, intervention and accountability.

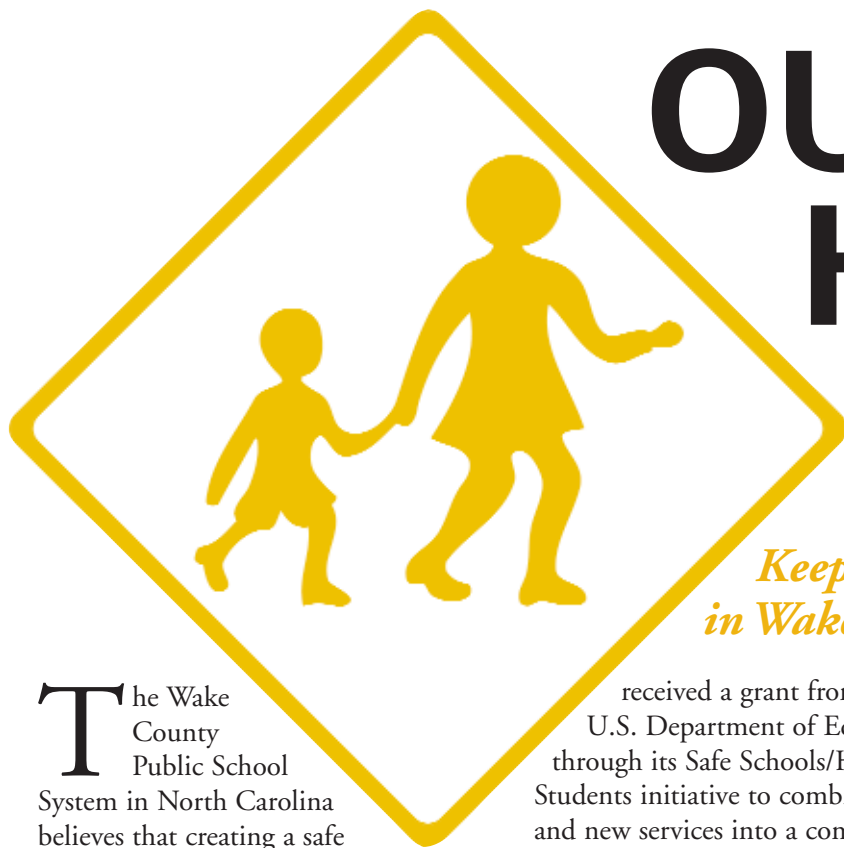
To join the Satellite Town

Meeting, call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327), or visit www.ed.gov/satelliteevent. Also, view live or archived Webcasts of the meeting by visiting Apple Computer's Apple Learning Interchange at <http://ali.apple.com/events/aliqttv>.

The Satellite Town Meeting is produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Alliance of Business, with support from the Bayer Foundation, the Procter and Gamble Fund, and Target Stores.

Many of the references for creating safe schools in this issue were provided by the Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program. For more information, visit www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS.

Since 1999, the new program initiative Safe Schools/Healthy Students has awarded a total of 77 grants to communities working in partnership with local agencies, in order to support school safety and health programs. To learn more about Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant opportunities, visit www.sshsac.org.



OUT OF HARM'S WAY

Keeping the "Whole Child" Safe in Wake County, N.C.

The Wake County Public School System in North Carolina believes that creating a safe school requires more than instituting metal detectors and stockade fences. In fact, it employs neither of these two measures.

To have healthy students, thus safer schools, Wake County aims to ensure students' physical, mental and emotional well-being. The school district has put into place clinic-like centers in elementary schools that offer young children everything from immunizations to early language development programs.

In addition, Wake County schools adopted a number of national programs that teach students about empathy and anger management, making friends and preventing violence.

"We're looking at the whole child, that's why we started out with character education," says Ron Anderson, grant director of Wake County's Safe Schools/Healthy Students project. "Character ed basically means asking 'what kind of whole person do we want?' We don't just want a child who makes good grades. We want a child who is a good citizen."

Two years ago Wake County

received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education through its Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative to combine existing and new services into a comprehensive, community-wide approach. "The grant helped us move in dramatically new and bold directions in those areas," Anderson said.

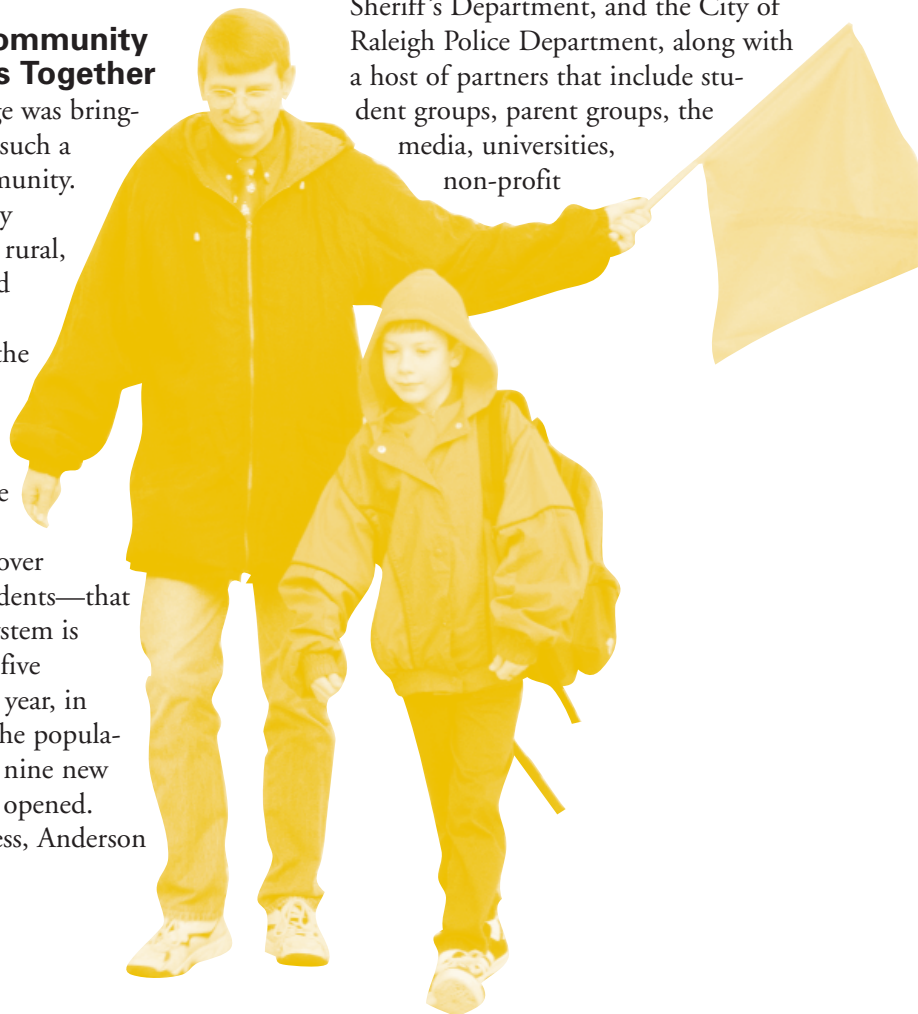
Pulling Community Resources Together

The challenge was bringing together such a diverse community. Wake County encompasses rural, suburban and urban areas, with one of the largest gaps between rich and poor in the state. The county is so large—with over 600,000 residents—that the school system is divided into five regions. Last year, in response to the population growth, nine new schools were opened.

Nonetheless, Anderson

said, the school system was able to find a consensus for its school safety initiative because "we looked at this from the perspective of 'what do we want to build?' rather than 'what do we want to fix?'"

For the grant, the Wake County Public School System joined with the local human services agency, the Sheriff's Department, and the City of Raleigh Police Department, along with a host of partners that include student groups, parent groups, the media, universities, non-profit



groups, and state and national organizations.

The human services agency, which serves mental health needs, is a major stakeholder in the Safe Schools project. The agency trains mentors to work with children with serious emotional and behavioral problems. Mental health is a critical element of the safety initiative because children suffering from depression, thoughts of suicide and other emotional issues can be prone to acts of violence.

Anderson points out that partnerships with the community also strengthen federal dollars, funneling local and state funds into the Safe Schools project. "Typically what communities have is not collaboration but cooperation. Cooperation essentially means 'I'm going to help you get this job done.' Collaboration means 'we're going to pull our resources together towards a common goal,'" he said.

Starting Early for Safety

At the center of the Safe School investments are preschools. In its assessment of the community, Wake County found that early academic and behavior problems are the number one risk factor for securing safe schools. Anderson, who joined the school system in 1984 as a director of guidance and social work, said the correlation between academic success and less juvenile crime makes for safer schools.

The "Ready to Learn" centers, created over 10 years ago, provide young children with a variety of health and early development services on school premises. The "Parents as Teachers" program, in which trained staff make home visits, helps parents of newborns learn appropriate developmental skills.

Another family-oriented program,

"Families and Schools Together (FAST)," works intensively with families for eight weekly sessions to involve them more in their children's education. School officials say attendance is high.

At the elementary level, the Safe Schools project includes three curriculum efforts to help children get along with each other—the national programs "Get Real About Violence" and "Second Step," and the research-based "3-C" project, which stands for

"Communication,

Cooperation and Confidence." The curricula is also taught in middle and high schools, where each school has a student club called "SAVE"—Students Against Violence Everywhere.

Physical security is also critical in Wake County schools, which uses cameras, keypad locks, badges and resource officers. Additionally, the crisis hotline "Save-A-Friend" connects student callers directly to a mental health practitioner.

Student to Student

Anderson says he feels strongest about the Youth Advisory Board, a cross-section of 30 student leaders. The students are heavily involved in outreach, which includes visiting elementary children to speak about nonviolence, and sponsoring the annual Teen Summit, which engaged 350 students from all over the county last September.

Youth Advisory Board member Alix Feldman, a sophomore at Athens Drive High School in Raleigh, says her

idea of a safe school is "one where you don't have to worry about finding alternate routes in the hallway because there's a fight going on." She added that it is also one where the administration is visible and highly interactive with students.

Wake County also found that youth programs were strong predictors of academic success, which is why the county is developing more activities for young people.

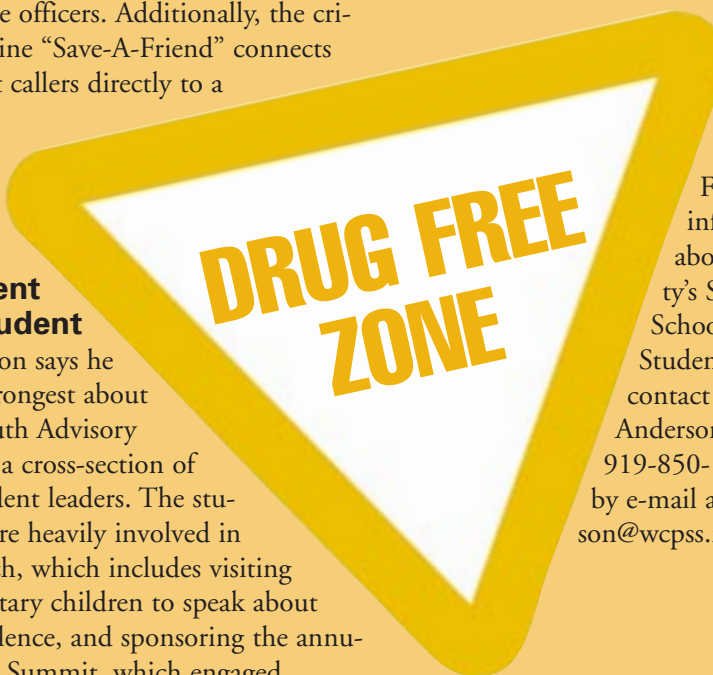
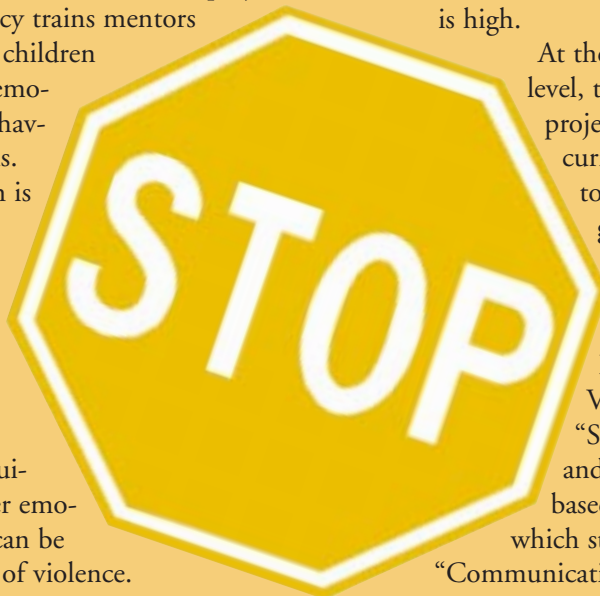
"When kids are in activities, they're meeting with adults who help build those assets and protective factors," said Anderson, referring to the 40 key assets—such as positive family communication, positive peer influence and a caring school climate—identified in a survey by the Search Institute of more than 13,000 Wake County students.

He said the study "helped us look at what kind of things we want to build for all kids, instead of 'those' kids. We're talking about success for all children. If you target children and only talk about the 'problem' ones, you end up getting a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Wake County received a

three-year, \$9 million grant to spread over 122 schools.

For more information about the county's Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative, contact Ron Anderson at 919-850-1660 or by e-mail at rfanderson@wcpss.net.





PARTNERSHIP

for Family Involvement in Education

A coalition of more than 7,100 business, community, religious and education organizations nationwide.

Parties Provide Safe Haven for Kansas High School Students

Parents in suburban Shawnee Mission, Kansas, know their children are safe on Friday nights, thanks to an idea that is practically from the school district's own backyard.

At Shawnee Mission West High, one of the area's five high school campuses, district staff work in partnership with the PTA to host "after parties." These parties, which average as many as 900 students, are held after home athletic events on Friday evenings. The admission fee is \$1 per student and students are allowed to invite one guest each.

Although after parties are not new at Shawnee Mission—the first of them started over 15 years ago—they have grown in popularity. Whether they are limited to after-prom and graduation night parties or extend to parties following athletic events varies by school.

"The goal of the after party is to give a safe alternative to students on a Friday night," said Assistant Principal Kevin Burgat. "Many times the athletic



events end around 9:00 p.m., and it is difficult for students to find activities to complete the evening. The after parties generally last two hours following the game and provide positive, safe activities for students until 11:30 p.m."

Nearly 60 parents help supervise the parties and coordinate the food and the disc jockey.

According to Burgat, these are primarily parent-driven activities and the administrators simply stay on hand with district security to handle any potential problems. The parties also allow parents an active role in their teenagers' lives at a time when their peers are central.

This year, a group of parents has worked with administrators at the school to develop a plan to deal with any emergencies, should they occur during the party.

Kristen Smith, parent of a former Shawnee Mission student and PTA volunteer, said, "I know we save lives every year by keeping kids in positive activities that provide an alternative to being out on the streets."

For more information, please contact Leigh Anne Neal, director of public information and communications, Shawnee Mission Public Schools, at 913-993-6447, or visit www.smsd.org

Keeping Kids Safe in Los Angeles County

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) is playing a key role in keeping kids safe in the county's 81 school districts. In California, all public schools are required by state law to have compre-

hensive safety plans that address the threats impacting the campus climate. These include the challenges posed by racial conflicts, street gangs, and drug-related crime and violence.

Last year, Los Angeles County's

K-12 campuses reported thousands of crimes, including battery, robbery/extortion, assault with a deadly weapon and property damage, resulting in overall losses of \$7.9 million. The county is home to over 1,300

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

criminal street gangs comprised of more than 150,000 active members.

LACOE's Safe Schools Center provides local leadership and support to help ensure that all schools are secure, drug-free communities. Through a collaborative approach, the center has joined with community-based organizations, including the Richstone Family Center and the Centinela Juvenile Diversion Program, and law enforcement agencies such as the U.S. Department of Justice and the L.A. County Sheriff's Department. These groups work together to turn the tide—day by day, year by year.

"Effective instruction and learning happens when teachers and students go to class knowing that they're in a safe environment," says Donald W. Ingwerson, the county superintendent of schools. "There has to be freedom from fear."

Conflict resolution and mentoring programs have been particularly

effective in this endeavor because they empower students to aid in problem solving. This is best exemplified by the successes of Leuzinger High School and Lennox Middle School. Both schools have seen a significant drop in the number of student suspensions and expulsions.

These two urban campuses were once plagued with racial tension, numerous gang activity and great concerns over classroom management. Now, the tensions have eased greatly and serious behavior problems have been mitigated. In short, the schools have become success stories.

"Without a doubt," adds Ingwerson, "safety is a prerequisite to academic excellence."

To learn more about programs and services provided by the Los Angeles County Office of Education, visit www.lacoe.edu, or contact Bill Ybarra at the Safe School Center at 562-922-6391.



CALENDAR

April 17–22, Washington, D.C.
National Association of School Psychologists 33rd Annual Convention. Call 513-674-4258, or visit www.naspweb.org.

May 9, Washington, D.C.
Partnership for Family Involvement in Education National Meeting. Call 202-401-0056, or visit <http://pfie.ed.gov>.

May 10–11, Washington, D.C.
Business and Education 2001 Conference: Leveraging Technology—A Call to Action. Call The Conference Board at 212-339-0345, or visit www.conference-board.org/b&e.htm.

May 28–30, Atlanta, Georgia
International Fatherhood Conference. Call the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership at 1-888-528-6725, or visit www.internationalfathers.com.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Join the Partnership's listserv to receive the latest information on family involvement in education. Sign on at www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/partner_listserv.html.

The American Youth Policy Forum now has eight of its publications available free of charge on its Web site at www.aypf.org, including *Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works—and What Doesn't*, and *Some Things DO Make a Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs*. For a hard copy while supplies last, fax a request to 202-775-9733, or write to The American Youth Policy Forum, 1836 Jefferson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

While these resources are relevant to the mission of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, they are available from a variety of sources and their presence here does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.



Pablo—LIFE graduate, now mentor—helps 13-year-old Daniel with his homework.

ABOUT *our* PARTNERS

Life Is For Everyone, Inc. (LIFE) is a partnership of public schools and faith communities in Salinas, California, formed for one purpose—to reach out to students who can benefit from interaction with caring and skilled adults.

Formed in 1998, four congregations are involved, each partnered with a middle or elementary school. Each church hosts a center for after-school activities three times a week, attended by between

10 and 50 students. These centers serve as neighborhood safe havens

where school-referred children and young teens can develop the skills they need to be resilient and to make good decisions.

"These are kids who want to improve their grades but also want to do more than just study—they learn about getting jobs, writing resumes, and getting ready to graduate. The centers help students interact with each other, and teach about tolerance and being positive," said Steve Royster, LIFE's president of the board of directors.

For more information, contact Rev. Ken Feske at the First Baptist Church of Salinas at 831-422-9872 or by e-mail at kfeske@1stbaptist.net.



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Superintendent Appointed Education Secretary

On January 24, in a ceremony attended by both President Bush and Vice President Cheney, former Houston school superintendent Dr. Roderick R. Paige was sworn in as the seventh secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

"I will work with the men and women who have dedicated themselves to the Department of Education and to students across the country to empower states, school districts, schools and parents in order that we may serve the needs of our students," said Paige. "When each and every child in this country can receive a quality public education, we will have made history together."

As superintendent of the Houston Independent School District (HISD), the largest school district in Texas, Paige



Secretary Paige (right) and President Bush attend a school event commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.

led several reform efforts for the school system that increased teachers' salaries, built partnerships with business and

community leaders, and created a number of charter schools. In addition, Paige established the PEER (Peer Examination, Evaluation, and Redesign) committee, which focused on achieving a research-based comprehensive and balanced reading program for every school.

As a recipient of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students federal grant, HISD also provides after-school programs, mental health counseling, and family involvement opportunities to create safe environments on its 295 campuses. In February, Paige will host the Satellite Town Meeting, which will focus on school safety initiatives (see page 3 for details).